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On a Safe Conclusion concerning the Origin of the
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of certain objects in their language.

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BY

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On a SAFE CONCLUSION concerning the ORIGIN of the ESKIMO, which can be drawn from the designation of certain objects in their language. By Dr. H. RINK, of Copenhagen.

IN an earlier paper in the Anthropological Institute's Journal,¹ I have endeavoured to give a summary of the Eskimo language and the mutual relation of its dialects in general. In prosecuting the same linguistic study I have been led to a conclusion concerning the different theories on the origin of the Eskimo which I suppose may at least serve to restrict the number of possibilities that this obscure field of research offers to our imagination, and in this way to simplify the investigation. In regard to the cradle of the Eskimo race we have before all to discern between their original home and the country in which they have developed their present culture, which is characterised by their capability of procuring means of subsistence in Arctic Regions where no other nation can live. We will confine ourselves to the latter, the *Eskimo culture-home*, and our principal scope will be that of pointing out one or two necessary conditions for guessing the site of this home. It is well known that the regions at our disposal for these considerations are of enormous extent, comprising the continental seaboard and the islands of America beyond a line varying between 56° and 60° N.L., including Greenland and the extreme north-eastern corner of Siberia. This territory was occupied by the Eskimo as its only inhabitants before their modern contact with the European race. We divide them into Eastern and Western, separated by Cape Bathurst in about the middle of the coastline from Hudson's Bay to Bering's Strait. The Eastern Eskimo comprise the Labradorians, the Greenlanders, and the Central Tribes; the Western embrace the inhabitants of the shores about the estuaries of the Mackenzie River, and those of the extreme West including the Asiatic Eskimo. However, with regard to the question as to what part of the coast the first Eskimo settlers arrived, Greenland and the most northern islands must of course be exempted. Consequently the Eskimo culture-home has to be sought for between the extreme south-eastern point of Labrador and somewhere on the Siberian coast in the vicinity of Bering's Strait. The conditions, above alluded to, that have to be observed in prosecuting our research upon

¹ "Journ. Anthropol. Inst.," vol. xv, No. 2, 1885, p. 239.

this extensive line, are in the first place, *that only one such culture-home can have existed*, and secondly, *that even this one must have had a relatively small extent*. It must be considered impossible that the settlers should have arrived in two or more detachments at the Arctic or sub-Arctic sea-coast, and there developed their Eskimo culture independently of each other. Certainly there are several reasons for believing that after the dispersion of the first settlers had begun, new emigrants from the interior joined these pioneers even in places distant from the culture-home, but in this case they wholly adopted the habits of the latter, and in doing so became amalgamated with them. As to the "relatively small extent" of the "home," this has to be taken as small, judged by an Eskimo scale of distances between their establishments: the settlers must have been able to maintain a certain degree of mutual intercourse.

The extraordinary uniformity alone of the utensils, instruments, and weapons common to all the widely spread tribes, is suggestive of one common origin. However, it might be objected that this uniformity was a natural consequence of the causes that have given rise to the inventions being almost the same everywhere, leaving but little chance for variation. I therefore resorted to the testimonies preserved in the language. In settling on the border of the ocean and adopting an altered mode of life *the new comers must have been obliged to form a number of new words* designating partly the natural objects, especially the animals which for the first time they met with here, partly the contrivances which the struggle for existence had driven them to produce. Scanning the whole series of such objects there could be no doubt as to which of them should be preferred as the most important. It is well known that seals and whales afford almost all the means by which the Eskimo are able to secure themselves a comfortable life, and that their art of catching them has attracted the admiration even of the civilised world.

The new words which had to be created could be formed partly out of the already existing stem-words by derivation, partly by inventing new radicals. It is evident that in our investigation here by far the most stress must be laid on the latter. A selection of the most important words of the said kind was easily extracted from the Greenland and the Labrador dictionaries, but the question was how to find the counterparts in the much poorer vocabularies of the other dialects. The problem was that of instituting a comparison between the words by which the same objects are designated in the dialects east and west of Cape Bathurst, ascertaining how far identity or similarity could be discovered. I picked out 36 words relating to

1. The spotted seal, *qassigiaq* (*Phoca vitulina*).
2. The fiord seal, *natseq* (*Phoca hispida*).
do. old male, *tiggaq* "
3. The thong seal, *ugssuk* (*Phoca barbata*).
4. Saddleback seal, *qairolik* (*Phoca grænlandica*).
5. Walrus, *åveg*.
6. Balæna mysticetus, *arfeq*.
7. Beluga leucas, *qilaluvaq* (white whale).
8. Narwhal, *tågålik*.
9. Swordfish, *årdluk* (*Orca gladiator*).
10. Blubber, *orssog*.
11. Walrus and narwhal tusk, *tågåq*.
12. Whalebone, *sorraq*.
13. Edible whaleskin, *måtak*.
14. A seal's breathing-hole in the ice, *agdlo*.
15. The open skinboat ("Women's boat"), *umiag*.
16. One-bladed paddle, *angût*.
17. Mast, *nåparut*.
18. Sail, *tingerdlaut*.
19. Kayak, *qajaq*.
20. do. side lath, *siårneg*, *apûmak*.
21. do. rib, *tiggik*.
22. do. prow, *niutak*.
23. do. cross-piece, *masik*.
24. do. paddle double-bladed, *parutik*.
25. Shaft of the large harpoon, also the harpoon itself,
unåq.
26. Flexible part of this shaft, *igimaq*.
27. A bone-cover on the shaft, *gåteq*.
28. The loose harpoon-point, *tûkaq*.
29. The action of throwing and hitting with the harpoon,
nauligpoq.
30. Throwing stick, *norssaq*.
31. A peg for finger-rest on the harpoon, *tikågut*.
32. Capturing line, *aleq*.
33. do. bladder, *avataq*.
34. Spear or knife for stabbing, *qapût*.
35. Bladder arrow, *agdliqaq*.
36. Bird arrow, *nueq*, *nugfit*.

This list indeed exhibits a more complete selection of the

most important words concerning the marine mammalia and their capture than might have been expected from the scanty linguistic resources of the West. If now, instead of some among them that already may have been used in an earlier home (*e.g.*, Nos. 16, 22, 34), we would add objects from other domains, but also more or less closely bound up with the idea of a sea-coast, as *e.g.*, salt water, ebb and flood, the polar bear, sea birds, and other animals, similarity or absolute identity might be pointed out in the same way. But the above selection, I suppose, will suffice for our present considerations; its number of words widely exceeds what might be necessary for proving *a common origin, and excluding the possibility of an accidental likeness* or an invention by settlers on the sea-coast without sufficient opportunity of exchanging their ideas.

From this consideration of what may be stated with certainty, we will pass to what furthermore may be concluded with more or less probability. In the paper quoted above, I have suggested that the culture-home in question occupied the mouth of a river or of several rivers, and that in the course of time it would receive settlers from the interior, while on the other hand emigrants successively spread from this home over the Arctic regions. In a small volume on "The Eskimo Tribes," published in 1887,¹ and chiefly dealing with linguistic questions, I have tried to show how the dispersion of the Eskimo seems to have continued, supposing Alaska to have been the culture-home. The track of the wanderers appears to be indicated by the following facts still to be observed in the state of the present inhabitants, going from West to East:—

1. The successive completion of the most valuable invention, the kayak with its implements and the art of using them, especially the double-bladed paddle, the great harpoon with the hunting bladder, the kayak-clothes, and the hunter's capability of rising to the surface again in case of being overturned.

2. The gradual change of several customs in the same way in proceeding from South and West, to North and East, namely, the use of labrets or lip ornaments ceasing at the Mackenzie River, the use of masks at festivals ceasing in Baffin's Land, the women's hair dressing gradually changing between Point Barrow and Baffin's Bay.

3. The construction of buildings and at the same time in some degree the social organisation and religious customs. The gradual, but still only slight change in all these features of the state of culture seems to go side by side with the increasing natural difficulties and the stupefying effect of isolation in removing from the original home.

¹ "Meddelelser om Grönland," vol. xi.

If in this way we maintain the supposition of the Eskimo culture having been propagated from the extreme West to the East, the number of the wanderers who brought it may nevertheless have become augmented by Easterly Tribes. As above alluded to, inland people of the Eskimo race, yielding to the pressure of hostile Indians and retiring to the North, may have met and associated with immigrants of their own nation, who already had reached the central regions beyond Cape Bathurst. But in this case the former must have learned and adopted the new culture from the latter. This suggestion even may serve to explain several differences between East and West, and the relatively large number of emigrants to Greenland.

Now there still remains a theory to be touched on which, moreover, must be called the oldest and perhaps still the most popular one, namely, that of an emigration from Asia. This suggestion is supported by several, certainly somewhat isolated, but nevertheless striking similarities between Asiatic and American aborigines. But there is at any rate one question also in this case previously to be settled, and this is again that of the probable situation of the culture-home. Considering the manner in which Bering's Strait can be crossed and the means of securing subsistence for settlers on its shores, an emigration can hardly have been effected excepting by perfectly developed and fairly equipped Eskimo, and consequently the cradle of their culture in this case must have been situated in Asia. Whether this may be judged possible or even probable, must depend on more comprehensive researches than have hitherto been made concerning the archæology and geography of North-Eastern Siberia and the traditions of the inhabitants thereabout.

Since my last paper in 1885 my sources of information have been added to by the following eminent explorers:—

A. Jacobsen; his "*Journey in Alaska, 1881-83*," edited by A. Woldt, Leipzig, 1884. Jacobsen also furnished me with much information and a written vocabulary from North and South Alaska, and quite lately I had the opportunity of inspecting under his guidance the admirable ethnological collection from Alaska, procured by him for the "*Museum für Volkskunde*" at Berlin. At my request he also gave me a list of Eskimo words belonging to those especially referred to before.

P. H. Ray; his "*Report on the Point Barrow Expedition*," Washington, 1885. This work contains an excellent supplement to the earlier vocabularies from Alaska.

J. Murdoch, member of the same Point Barrow Expedition, has suggested a theory on the migrations of the Eskimo deviating from mine ("*American Anthropologist*," April, 1885), but he

has afforded me valuable information by pamphlets and reprints as well as by letters.

F. Boas, the well-known explorer of the Central Regions; his principal work, "The Central Eskimo," Washington, 1889. I have had the opportunity of co-operation and of personally conversing with him, and am indebted to him for very extensive information by letter. He agrees with me in asserting ("Science," December 2, 1887) that the Eskimo reached the ice-covered ocean in one body.

G. Holm, our well-known explorer of the hitherto unknown part of Danish East Greenland, his admirable work on the "Ethnology of East Greenland" ("Meddelelser om Grönland"), besides much co-operation and ready assistance.

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